

BOOK REVIEW

ANDE, TITRE, *Leadership & Authority: Bula Matari and Life-Community Ecclesiology in Congo*, Regnum Books International, 2010, xviii + 204pp. ISBN 978-1-870345-72-9 (paper).

Some scholars have argued that bad leadership has become a legacy that reproduces itself in subsequent generations as the conditions that nurtured it in the previous generations are allowed to continue. Bad leadership therefore has come to be considered as an inevitable part of the human condition in Africa. In his book *Leadership & Authority: Bula Matari and Life-Community Ecclesiology in Congo* Georges Titre Ande is optimistic that bad leadership in Africa will come to an end. However, its end has to be the result of collective involvement of institutions such as the church and the state that owe their people a life free of bad leadership.

Leadership & Authority: Bula Matari and Life-Community Ecclesiology in Congo is derived from Ande's doctoral thesis presented to the University of Birmingham. It is written by one of the bishops in the Anglican Church of Congo with a wide experience in church administration. Ande was a parish priest, principal of an Anglican Theological College in Bunia and currently he is the Anglican bishop of the Diocese of Aru. Ande writes from a bitter experience of violence and conflict in Congo and seeks to construct a post-colonial liberation theology for the Anglican Church in Africa. According to Ande, an African post-colonial liberation theology can have a significant impact "if a critical understanding of socio-political situation in contemporary Africa is taken seriously" (3).

Ande points out that leadership in African society was more consensual and democratic than is commonly thought. He says "authority was also people-centred with a consensual and participatory democracy" (33). To that extent Africa's dictators however much they may claim to uphold traditional values, "have ignored the cultural norms and understandings they imply" (40).

Ande is an honest critique of the role of the church in the political affairs of Congo. He argues that while the Roman Catholic Church, though with little impact, "was able to challenge the post-colonial regimes" (57), the non-Roman Catholic churches "opted to clone the state's authority as a normative organizational model" (58). For instance, the Church of Christ in Congo "offered biblical support to political ideologies, and built its own life on these ideologies" (52). That is why during Mobutu's regime, the president of the Church of Christ in Congo "insisted that the Christian life and ecclesial realities must conform to values and reforms extolled by the political leaders" (49).

Ande argues that church leaders in Congo have not only failed to challenge adequately the excesses of political absolutism but also the ecclesiastical absolutism. The reason being that in churches such as the Anglican Church of Congo, authority "is parsonalized and exercised through a patron-client network" (87) as it was in the Bula Matari model. He further says that it is this patron-client model that has contributed to exploitation and corruption in the church in Congo.

Ande does not only critique the church leaders' understanding and use of authority but also offers an alternative model that he calls "Life-Community Ecclesiology" (3). Life-Community Ecclesiology is where "leadership is a function of the Christian community and not a status over against it" (149) and is where apostolic succession belongs to all the people of God. He argues that "in Life-Community ecclesiology, Christians are to assume a critical stance vis-a-vis the authorities, traditions and institutions of this world" (169).

The strength of this book is in the fact that while recognizing the negative impact of colonialism, Ande challenges the post-colonial political and church leaders to take responsibility for the present situation in Congo. Ande's assessment of church leadership for too often preferring privilege and the open exercise of power instead of humble service, has a much wider relevance than simply to the church in Congo.

Leadership & Authority: Bula Matari and Life-Community Ecclesiology in Congo well achieves its objectives and has merits on several levels: First, this is a book written by one of the dynamic bishops with a long experience in church administration. The author has brought to his work not only a critical attitude to the church in Congo but also an observer's impression. Second, the detailed select bibliography that includes primary and secondary sources adds to the value of this book as it indicates that the author has made a thorough investigation of the field. Third, this book is well-organized and easy to read. Its readability is also aided by the detailed and helpful index of names and subjects.

Although one of the unique contributions of this book is the highlighting of authority within the church as authority-for-life, the author does not indicate in detail what role the church leaders should play in the building process of a just and fair society. One would have expected a detailed analysis of what this "authority-for-life" means for the future of the church in Congo. On the whole, the merits of this book far outweigh any observable limitations making it a work on leadership and authority that will stand the test of time.

Of the very few books currently tackling the issue of Leadership and Authority, Ande's book, *Leadership & Authority: Bula Matari and Life-Community Ecclesiology in Congo* stands out. This book makes a major contribution to the discussion on leadership and authority in Africa by highlighting the fact that an end to the abuse of authority in the church in Africa cannot just happen. It has to be the result of collective involvement of the post-colonial political and church leaders that owe their people a life free of confusion. He proposes that authority within the church should be authority-for-life.

Ande has written one of the most valuable books which deserve to be read not only by those with an interest in the future of the church in Africa, but also by anyone concerned with the debate over leadership and authority within the church. This is a very important addition to the history of Christianity in Africa in general and Congo in particular. **Prof. CHRISTOPHER BYARUHANGA (Rev Dr), Uganda Christian University, Mukono - Uganda.**